

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MEXICO 03463 220023Z

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SUBJECT: THE STATE AND ART: ECHEVERRIA STIRS A DEBATE

1. AT THE OPENING APRIL 14 OF AN EXHIBITION OF DAVID ALFARO SIQUEIROS, PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA MADE SEVERAL REMARKS WHICH PROVOKED GREAT INTEREST AMONG (AND DISAGREEMENT FROM) ARTISTIC COMMUNITY IN MEXICO.

2. INAUGURATING THE SESSION, THE PRESIDENT:

A) CRITICIZED ARTISTS FOR THEIR "EXCESSIVE INDIVIDUALISM" AND CALLED FOR SOLIDARITY IN EXPRESSING A MORE "AFFIRMATIVE NATIONALISM";

B) CONDEMNED THE "STERILE BUREAUCRACY" OF THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF FINE ARTS (INBA, DEPENDENCY OF GOM SECRETARIAT OF EDUCATION), AND ASKED ARTISTS TO RECOMMEND HOW IT SHOULD BE REORGANIZED OR WHAT SHOULD REPLACE IT; AND

C) DECLARED THAT "IF WE REALLY WANT TO COUNTER-ACT THE COMMERCIAL PROPAGANDA OF THE DECADENT CONSUMER SOCIETY", MEXICAN ARTISTS WOULD HAVE TO RETURN TO POPULAR ROOTS AND TO TRADITIONAL ARTS FOR INSPIRATION.

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PAGE 02 MEXICO 03463 220023Z

3. REACTION WAS PROMPT. INBA DIRECTOR SERGIO GALINDO

SAID INBA'S PROBLEMS WOULD DISAPPEAR IF ITS BUDGET WAS TRIPLED OR QUADRUPLED. MORE IMPORTANT, MEXICAN POET, WRITER, AND DIRECTOR OF MEXICO'S MOST OUTSTANDING INTELLECTUAL MAGAZINE, OCTAVIO PAZ TOOK DIRECT ISSUE WITH SOME OF THE PRESIDENT'S STATEMENTS AND PROMISED TO DEAL WITH THEM MORE FULLY IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF HIS MAGAZINE, PLURAL. PAZ DISAGREED WITH THE IDEA THAT PUBLIC OFFICIALS SHOULD EXPRESS SUPPORT FOR ONE OR ANOTHER AESTHETIC TENDENCY, ARGUING THIS WAS A FUNCTION RESERVED TO THE PUBLIC. THE PRESENTLY DEGENERATE STATE OF MEXICAN MURALISM PAZ SAID, WAS DUE PRECISELY TO INTERVENTION OF THE STATE, WHICH TRIED TO CONVERT IT INTO AN "OFFICIAL ART".

4. COMMENT: ECHEVERRIA, WHO THE NEXT EVENING APPLAUDED THE VISITING CUBAN BALLET, APPEARS TO BE TAKEN WITH THE IDEA OF ART WORKING IN TANDEM WITH OR SERVING THE STATE. OUR IMPRESSION IS, HOWEVER, THAT HE PROBABLY HAD NOT THOUGHT THROUGH IMPLICATIONS OF HIS CRITICISM AND SUGGESTIONS, AND MAY HAVE BEEN SURPRISED AT THE OUTSPOKEN OPPOSITION OF OCTAVIO PAZ. THE PRESIDENT, WHO HAS COURTED MEXICAN INTELLECTUALS, HAS NOT COMMENT FURTHER AND MAY NOT RETURN TO THE THEME. PAZ HAS PROMISED MORE, HOWEVER, AND WHAT HE AND OTHERS HAVE TO SAY SHOULD BE INTERESTING.
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